

CONTINUOUS GROWTH GENERATED BY AGRICULTURE



Although the Great Wrath destroyed the village of Kemi completely and also caused severe damage to the lower parts of the Tornio Valley, Rovaniemi escaped with scarcely any losses at all. Even so, the farms there were similarly exempted from taxation for two or three years.

Sweden lost its position as a major power, which led to a re-assessment of the state of the country. Instead of striving for external conquests, efforts were made to promote development at home by providing incentives to the agricultural population. Results were soon to be seen even in Rovaniemi, for where there had only been 58 dwellings there in 1725, the level reached in the early 17th century was regained in the 1750's and the number had risen to 140 by the end of the century. This shows quite clearly how Rovaniemi had suffered for more than 100 years from Sweden's attempts to strengthen its position as a major power and could not recover until a generation had elapsed after the final abandonment of these efforts.

The number of farms continued to increase, most notably on account of the establishment of

Settlement began to spread beyond the river banks in the mid-18th century, reaching the shores of the lakes in particular.

The farm of Käyrämö north of Rovaniemi, on the border with Lapland, and behind it the hill of Käyrästunturi.

entirely new ones, causing settlement to expand gradually into the lake areas. The first dwelling not to be established beside a river was at Nampajarvi in the village of Kemihaara in 1733.

Slash-and-burn cultivation had been abandoned in Rovaniemi by the mid-18th century, although many of the resulting cleared areas were used to increase the amount of arable land. The largest farms were self-sufficient in terms of barley and rye, and the vicarage apparently had large quantities of excess grain to sell. The yield was not sufficient to satisfy the needs of all the inhabitants, however, and large amounts had to be obtained from elsewhere in the years of famine. Even so, a large proportion of the yield at the end of the 18th century was being used for the production of alcohol, which was then sold in Lapland. In fact, a total of 100 farms in Rovaniemi were en-

gaged in distilling in 1798 and only 30 not, mainly for the reason that, being newly established, they simply could not afford to use grain for purposes other than seed and basic food. Even the old-established farms would add straw, chaff or bark to their bread in normal years as well as in difficult ones.

Gradually improving crop yields led to an increase in the numbers of livestock, so that a typical farm in Rovaniemi in the late 1780's would have had an average of 8–9 cows, 1–2 horses and about ten sheep. The most difficult problem at that time was cattle plague, which recurred almost every year.

Reindeer herding in a key position

Reindeer herding gained a prominent position in the 19th century, the number of reindeer rising from 200–300 to as many as 2000 by the middle of the century and even reaching 105000 for a short time at the end. Most of the reindeer herders and workers were Saami, who according to a source by the name of Suikki even formed a reindeer herding association beside the River Ounasjoki. Some farmers had



quite large herds of reindeer: one by the name of Matti Yliruikka, for example, could slaughter almost 500 reindeer a year. Incomes from reindeer herding were already exceeding those gained from salmon fishing in the mid-19th century, although they still only amounted to one tenth of those obtained from the sale of butter.

Agriculture forms the basis for continued growth

The rapid expansion of agriculture, accompanied by a simultaneous decline in fishing and hunting, meant that as much as 85 % of the incomes of the local people at the beginning of the 19th century were obtained from farming. The occasional periods of famine were unable to stop the population expansion,

which continued at an accelerating pace for 250 years from the 1720's onwards.

More efficient use was being made of arable land, and a crop rotation system began to develop in the early 19th century in which rye and barley alternated and the fields were left fallow every third year. The potato, which had been cultivated in the Oulu region from the 1760's onwards, also spread to Rovaniemi at that time, and rapidly became a staple crop. Horse-drawn ploughs began to replace spades for tilling the

As agriculture expanded and the rise of the wood processing industries increased the value of the forests, the farms became more affluent. The picture is of the Mylläri farmhouse on the eastern shore of Kirkonjärvi.



The Great Partition assigned areas of forest to the farms in proportion to the taxable land that they owned, the remaining forest being retained by the state. The private forests were concentrated close to the rivers, which meant that it was easy to float the logs down to the sawmills or pulp mills once forestry became more organized towards the end of the 19th century.

fields in the 1860's, and it was during the years of crop failure in that decade that livestock rearing replaced grain cultivation as the most important branch of farming. As grass would grow in the meadows even in poor summers, people considered livestock a safer alternative under the prevailing northerly conditions.

The Great Partition

The general reparcelling of land carried out in 1850–1895 marked an important stage in the development of farms in Rovaniemi. Fields and meadows had been allocated earlier, but the forests had not been divided up. Some 1500 ha of land was assigned per land assessment unit, and most farms corresponded in size to 1/8–1/3 of a unit.



Large-scale reindeer herding began in Rovaniemi in the 19th century, when a few farmers employed Saame workers to look after their herds. Although numbers have decreased from the 10,000 head of reindeer reported at the end of the century, Rovaniemi has retained its position as a centre for this occupation, housing the registered office of the Reindeer Herders' Association, for example.

The largest farms comprised half a land assessment unit, though the total land area of even a smaller farm could well be almost a thousand hectares, for unproductive wasteland was not counted as taxable land, and as much as two thirds of the land allocated to many of the farms was of this kind, usually peatland, which could often be afforested by the following generation. Forests were to occupy a prominent position as a source of wealth among the Rovaniemi people on the introduction of large-scale forestry, on account of the income from timber sales and the wages paid for lumbering work.

Growth of the landless population

The increase in the size of dwellings and their wealth in the late 18th century created an additional need for labour, which led to an expansion in the number of housemaids and hired labourers, even though most of the farm work was still done by the family members:

The number of farmless persons began to increase in the 1820's

Year	taxable dwellings	crofters or cotters dwellings	independent dwellings	other dwellings
1810	148	-	-	8
1830	147	89	-	73
1850	177	138	103	32
1870	233	207	211	36

There were basically three types of landless people:

- crofters, who would rent a patch of land from a farm, build a cottage of their own there and make their living mainly off that land;

- cotters, who would rent land in the same way but gained much of their living from other sources, cultivating a small field and keeping a cow merely to ensure a sufficiency of food;

- independent dwellers, who

typically lived by doing paid work or temporary jobs, had a cottage on someone else's land and did not have any cattle at all.

Where there had been only a few crofters, cotters and their family members in Rovaniemi at the beginning of the 19th century, they numbered over a thousand in 1860, at which point there were slightly less than 300 independent dwellers. Craftsmen and other skilled workers also began to settle in Rovaniemi

	1750	1790	1830	1860
farmers and their families	249	474	1081	1428
hired labourers and maids	28	113	233	309
others	20	19	653	1733



A knot of houses gathered around the church on the promontory of Korkaloniemi began to assume the role of a centre for the parish towards the end of the 18th century, and a century later this centre had acquired a hospital and a two-storey building in which the doctors lived. Severe flooding would take place every year in the area of the present-day lake of Kirkkolampi.

Employees of the town's first steam-powered sawmill, at Pitkäniemi, just after the turn of the century.

in the course of time, so that although there had only been about 20 of these in all at the end of the 18th century, they numbered over 300 by 1860.

Rovaniemi becomes an independent parish in 1785

With a population of some 450 persons, Rovaniemi was still less densely inhabited in 1725 than it had been in the peak year of 1620, but it was now growing at an accelerating pace, as were most settlements in Finland at that time. Thus the figure reached 1000 in the 1770's, 2000 at the beginning of the 1820's and 4000 in the 1860's.

In recognition of this expansion, Rovaniemi was declared an independent religious and administrative parish in 1785. Korkaloniemi began to emerge as the centre of this parish in the late 18th century. The curate and parish clerk had in fact already been living there for several decades. The controller of the border region lived at Korkalo, and the missionary land surveyor at either Ylikylä or Saarenkylä. Apart from the Clementeoff family of officers, who lived at Muurola, the gentry lived around the mouth of the River Ounasjoki. This class of society comprised some 30 persons in Rovaniemi at the end of the 18th century, quite a high figure in view of its location so far north and in the interior. The craftsmen and skilled workers lived on the shore at Lainas, and altogether there were almost 2000 people living in the Korkalo–Ylikylä–Saarenkylä area in 1860, over half of the total population of the parish.



The sawmills of Rovaniemi

For a quarter of a century, from the 1840's until the 1870's, Rovaniemi possessed the northernmost concentration of sawmills in Finland. They obtained their timber from the nearby forests, sawed it during the winter and floated the resulting rafts of beams, planks and boards down to the mouth of the River Kemijoki on the spring high waters. Most of the timber was then shipped to Britain.

The first application to start a sawmill, at Sinettä, was made by Lieutenant Magnus Fredrick Clementeoff and the curate of the time, Esaias Fellman, in 1780. The sawmill did not start operation until 1786, but it then continued with varying success for over a hundred years. More than 20 families were living close to it in the 1850's, providing a local population of almost a hundred adults if unmarried persons were included. The owner, Jakob Fellman, also lived there in the 1860's, as did its supervisor, the sea captain Anders Jonas Kihlgren.

A permit had been applied for in 1779 to establish a sawmill on the River Raudanjoki, but the project was abandoned. A new attempt 50 years later then led to the erection of a sawmill at Hakoköngäs in 1840, with some 20 families living close to it in 1870. The capacity of the sawmill was almost double that of Sinettä, reaching its peak in the 1880's. It was eventually sold in 1893 to the Kemi Company, which closed it down immediately and moved all production of sawn timber to its large sawmill at the mouth of the River Kemijoki.

A third sawmill was established at Meltaus in 1848. This was of roughly the same size as that at Hakoköngäs and gathered a population of 18 families around it in the 1850's, comprising some 80 adults. This sawmill, too, was sold to the Kemi Company in 1893, and was closed down five years later.

The sawmills at Meltaus and Hakoköngäs were each sending 20–30 rafts of timber down to the river mouth in spring time during the 1880's, and a further 10–15 rafts were sent from Sinettä.

The competitive position of the inland sawmills was altered drastically by the government decision to allow the construction of large steam-powered sawmills on the coast, for it was easier to transport round logs to the river mouth than sawn timber.

After a pause of about a decade, it was decided to set up steam-powered sawmills at the mouth of the River Ounasjoki, approximately on the site now occupied by the Arcticum building. The Pitkäniemi Sawmill was opened in 1901, while 1908 saw the commencement of the Pöykkö Sawmill, which even pursued an export trade of its own. The venture did not last long, however, and the mill was sold to the rival Kemi Company in 1913 and its equipment removed to that company's Seittenkari Sawmill in Sweden. The Rovaniemi Träförädling Ab sawmill was established by Swedes in 1917 and remained in operation until 1935.

Fearing that the sawmills in Rovaniemi would become their major rivals, the Kemi Company and Veitsiluoto Oy established an additional competitor of their own under the name Rovaniemen Saha Oy in 1934 in order to eliminate this danger. This did indeed soon become the only sawmill in Rovaniemi, and was later discontinued as unnecessary after the war.